

Neighborhood Grapevine

News from the City of Milwaukee's
Department of Neighborhood Services

Milwaukee Fire Safety Rate Betters National Average

by Todd Weiler

Recently released data from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) shows that Milwaukee beat the national average for fire safety in commercial buildings in 1999. That class of buildings includes offices, businesses, hotels, motels, rooming houses, boarding houses and apartments with 3 or more units. The Department of Neighborhood Services inspects 16,022 such structures each year. The fire department conducts 482 inspections on public buildings and the health department inspects 310 specialty buildings. Thanks in part to that effort, Milwaukee has beat the national average for the past 10 years and the fire risk trend continues to drop both locally and nationally.

It takes the NFPA nearly a year to collect the fire data from around the nation. In 1999 there were 275 fires in Milwaukee and 208,500 nationally. As a percent of the population, Milwaukee's rate is .452 and the national rate is .788 per 1,000 residents. This means your chances of being in a commercial building fire in Milwaukee are nearly half that of the national average.

While October is fire prevention month, there is a saying in the fire service that every day is fire prevention day. Milwaukee's low fire rate is due to a number of reasons. On the City side,

See Fire Rate page 2

New reinspection fee to target "problem" landlords

by Martin Collins

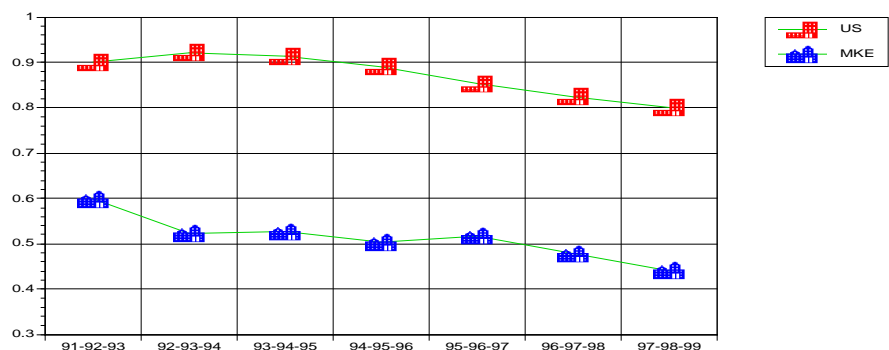
One of the greatest frustrations of Code Enforcement is the cost of getting compliance. After the public calls in a complaint, they want to see results. The "good" landlords are tired of paying for the problems of the "bad" landlords. A new ordinance should make both the public and "good" landlords happier. This new ordinance increases the cost of non-compliance and puts that cost closer to those who fail to correct the problem.

For over five years, the City has had an ordinance that allows the department to charge property owners for the cost of every reinspection of an order to correct code violations where the repairs had not been completed. The flat fee of \$60 was changed recently to become a sliding scale. The initial charge drops down to \$50 but the second is \$75, the third \$150 and the fourth and all subsequent reinspections are charged at the rate of \$300 per reinspection.

The reason for the change is that a number of property owners have chosen to take their chances with prosecution rather than comply with the code. The worst cases involve out-of-state owners who cannot be

See Reinspection Fee page 2

THREE YEAR AVERAGE COMMERCIAL FIRES PER 1,000 POPULATION



SOURCE: NFPA ANNUAL FIRE REPORT 1999 www.nfpa.org
MILWAUKEE FIRE DEPT RECORDS 1999
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU www.census.gov TNW V1.0 10/31/00

FIRE STATS from page 1

there is a rigorous inspection and plan exam program, annual inspections by DNS and the fire department to see that approved building systems are maintained and operative. Building owners have helped by selecting advanced building materials and design, expanded use of fire sprinkler systems, and educating tenants about the perils of fire. In fact, nationally, your chances are four times greater of dying in a car fire than a commercial fire..

The numbers for both national and local commercial fires continue a downward trend. As building systems improve, the "people" factor faces a growing challenge. Nearly every element of flammable risk is dealt with in the building codes. The codes protect life and property only when they are properly applied and adhered to. Too often the "people" factor is the cause of a tragedy. Overcrowding, blocked exits, and improper storage of flammable materials are the historical leading causes of commercial fire loss.

DNS inspectors visit every commercial building in Milwaukee every year. The Milwaukee Fire Department does the same for publicly owned buildings. "They are not looking to "catch" an owner violating the fire code, rather they want to educate the owner because the inspector won't be there every day." said DNS Commissioner Martin Collins. Mayor John Norquist added, "Together the inspector and building owner can review the plan that will protect that building and the neighboring ones so the whole city can be safe. Building codes are designed to protect the whole city, not just one building. This is a protective partnership that works. It enhances the quality of life in Milwaukee."

Fire Chief Larry Gardner said, "The Fire Department's focus on education of the public has greatly contributed to Milwaukee's outstanding statistics. As has been proven time and again, operating smoke detectors in residential buildings saves lives, while fire protection systems such as sprinklers will reduce property loss. We take fire safety and prevention very seriously. Firefighters regularly visit commercial and residential buildings to identify potential problem situations. As a department, we take great pride in these results and look forward to providing continued excellent fire service of the city of Milwaukee."

Not all single family homes and duplexes are inspected annually in Milwaukee. Tragically, it's after a nearby fire that people check their smoke detector and think about fire safety. Through the Milwaukee Fire Department's FOCUS program, homes in fire incident areas are voluntarily inspected. Also, the Milwaukee Fire Department along with MPS teaches school children how to Survive Alive at the Survive Alive house. All MPS second and fifth grade students participate in a home fire simulator. But the very old and the very young don't go to the Survive Alive House. More needs to be done.

If you know any elderly persons, you need to discuss fire safety with them. If you have very young children, you need to take special precautions. And most of all, smokers have a special responsibility to keep matches and lighters out of sight and out of reach. Statistically, they are more dangerous than a loaded handgun. Smoking in bed and playing with matches are the leading causes of residential fires. The very old and the very young will be the next victims if you don't think about fire safety today.

As the years go by and the tragic fires of Milwaukee's past fade in our memory, most likely so will the vigilance to prevent such fires. It takes continued effort to remind people to have a plan to deal with fire safety. Without such vigilance, code enforcement, and combined on going educational efforts, we are bound to repeat the lessons of a tragic past. Milwaukee cannot afford to let that happen. That's why every

State certification courses being offered

by Jon Lang

DNS Code Enforcement, AFSCME Local 2754, will be sponsoring classes in UDC and Commercial Building codes beginning in January 2001. UDC starts Wednesday January 17 from 5-7 pm at the 9th & Mitchell St. office, and runs for 8 weeks.

Commercial classes start Saturday January 27 and will be held at the AFSCME DC 48 office on 35th & St. Paul, from 8 am-12, for 8 weeks.

Cost is determined by number of participants. Price runs in the \$150 and up range. and is covered by tuition reimbursement. We need at least 10 people to form a class. For more info or to sign up contact Jon Lang x2132, or Elvin Maher x3166. ☺

Reinspection Fees from page 1

served with a summons and, therefore, run little risk of a municipal court action.

The central concept of the new ordinance is to bring the cost of noncompliance closer in time to the act of noncompliance. These fees are tax roll charges and must be paid in order to avoid tax foreclosure on the property. An appeal process is built into the system to grant a hearing to those who feel unfairly treated.

The hope is that this new incentive will make it easier for inspectors to obtain code compliance and will relieve some of the cost burden from other property owners. I have often heard the remark "Why should property owners who maintain their property shoulder the cost of enforcing the code against those who do not?" With this code change, those who do not comply with the code will carry more of that burden. Inspectors are encouraged to report to me on how well the process does or does not serve its intended purpose of encouraging earlier code compliance. ☺

THE NEW COST OF NON-COMPLIANCE

Reinspection	Old Cost	New Cost
1	\$60	\$50
2	\$60	\$75
3	\$60	\$150
4	\$60	\$300
5	\$60	\$300
6	\$60	\$300
TOTAL COST	\$360	\$1175*

Reinspection fees go directly on to the Property Tax bill.



400 Landlords attend Landlord Refresher Course

For the first time in two years, the City hosted a Landlord Training Refresher course. With a new millennium around the corner in 2001, landlords may have some new concerns to address. The City of Milwaukee is helping landlords understand those changes and prepare them for future problems. The half-day training brought landlords up to speed on issues of new code and ordinance changes, concerns over lead paint and much more. As many as 400 landlords were in attendance.

Over the past six years, 8,000 landlords operating an estimated 180,000 rental units have been trained in keeping illegal and destructive activity out of rental property. This free training program is presented by the City to help landlords screen their tenants and avoid code violations.

The regular landlord training class stresses the need for landlords to seek further education. This refresher course is being offered so landlords can keep abreast of the many new laws and techniques legally being used to maintain control of their properties. This class brings together a number of resources to help landlords. There are many new court decisions and concepts like landlord compacts, lead paint concerns and fair housing issues. If landlords ignore these issues, it could jeopardize their operation and increase costs.

This class and others like it are part of Neighborhood Service's pro-active programs aimed at preserving neighborhoods and working with public and private resources. It is paid for by a grant from the Community Development Block Grant Administration and the City of Milwaukee. 87 percent of those taking the class say they will change their management practices using the new information provided. ☺

First Floor Remodeling Update

by Jeff Crouse

The plans for the first floor remodeling have been finalized and the next step in the process, working on the detailed listing of partitions and furniture needed to be ordered, has been completed. The construction has begun. It is anticipated that June 2001 will be the date that we can occupy our new work area on the 1st floor.

The initial planning for the tenth floor remodeling project has been completed. Supervisors of the sections moving to the remodeled tenth floor, the architects, and the Commissioner will continue to meet to discuss the process. ☺

Update on the North Meadows Condominium Project:

by Karin Long

Not too long ago the City wanted to take North Meadows Condo project and bulldoze it to the ground. This 576 unit condo project, built in the 1970s had become a nightmare. A vast majority of the units had been sold to absentee owners with little or no property management skills. Tenants weren't being screened, there were no rental agreements and if there were they weren't being enforced. The Condo Association was in debt, with the Water Department threatening to turn off the water, roofs leaking, foundations on the verge of collapse, more abandoned cars than any I-41 junk yard and garbage strewn for as far as the eye could see. Drugs, gangs and every activity you could think of was going on at the complex. You could not have predicted that nine months later this condo project is the site for the best affordable housing in the state.

How was this accomplished? DNS staff members Don Schaeewe, Jr., Ron Roberts, and Karin Long, through legal maneuvering of the City Attorney David Halbrooks, were elected to the Board of Directors of North Meadows. Other problem solving people included Fred Curzon from Sherman Park, Eric Jernberg from Community Advocates and Jerry Sobczak (formerly of the Property Management Training Program) were also elected to the board. This strong combination of people brought together their experience, problem solving skills, love of community, and did the unbelievable.

The methods used to turn around this condo are the principals taught in the Landlord Training Program. Again, we learn just how important active property management is to a strong, safe, and healthy community. Stay tuned for more information on this project. To date, there have been 24 applications filed by hopeful owner occupants to purchase North Meadows units. ☺



The International Association of Crime Prevention Practitioners (ISCPP) held their 2000 ISCPP Conference in Milwaukee at the Milwaukee Hilton. Members from all over the world attended, including Canada, South Africa, and India. Two members from DNS were presenters at this international conference, Karin Long of the Landlord Training Program and Roger Cortez from the Grafitti project. The week long conference featured various presentations on crime prevention techniques used and developed by people in the US, Canada, South Africa, and South American countries. Congratulations to Karin and Roger for outstanding presentations. ☺

DNS How to reach us



286-3646 1673 S. 9th St, 3rd floor
286-4110 841 N. Broadway 10th floor
286-4897 Neighborhood Improvement Development Corp.

**Have a contribution for the April edition of the
DNS GRAPEVINE? Deadline March 15, 2001
Email it to Todd Weiler, Editor: tweile@ci.mil.wi.us**



(L-R) Nuisance Control Officer Anthony Goodman and interns Stacey Tyler and Steven Chalstrom



(L-R) Chris Kraco, John Dorszynski, Erica Roberts, Marsha McDaniel, John Cullaton, Jennifer Scholz, Maria Pellerin.

Meet the New DNS Staff

Chris Kraco joined DNS October 16th as a Code Enforcement Inspector. He graduated from Indiana University with a degree in Photo Journalism. After working for various newspapers and the Associated Press, then he moved to Florida and worked as a contractor doing residential and commercial remodeling for 11 years. He moved back "up north" and found the DNS job on-line. He's a member of the National Press Photographers Association. For fun Chris likes to juggle and ride his unicycle. (Good qualifications for DNS).

John Dorszynski started in the Code Enforcement Section on October 16th. He has enrolled in a Civil Engineering B.S. program. You may have seen him around City Hall. He spent 10 years in the water department billing section.

Erica Roberts became an Environmental Hygienist with DNS on July 17th, 2000. After graduating from UW-Milwaukee in 1998, she worked for a local non-profit organization and a telecommunications company before deciding to return to school and pursue a Master's Degree in Environmental Engineering from Milwaukee School of Engineering, which she is currently doing part time. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her fiancé, Mike, working on home-improvement projects, and enjoying the great outdoors, camping, rock climbing, and walking their dog, Zoe.

Marsha McDaniel joined DNS on May 17, 2000 as a Office Assistant. At the Mitchell Street office she processes vector based complaint orders like nuisance vehicles, animal fancier permits, and dog bite reports. Previously she was a temp for one year with the City working at the Northwest Health Center in the WIC program. She is a native of Chicago and she likes to travel. She has an adult son and daughter here in Milwaukee.

John Cullaton previously worked as a Vector Nuisance Officer. He transferred to the DNS Residential Section as a Code Enforcement inspector in July. John has a degree in recreational administration from UW-Lacrosse. He started in pest control in the mid-70's. He enjoys the code enforcement work but says it's more intense with the owner/tenant conflicts. He is married and has a teenage daughter and keeps himself busy keeping his house up.

Maria Pellerin started at the end of October as a Code Enforcement Inspector. She has an Associate Degree as a Dietetic Technician from MATC. She also has worked seven

years with the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program and three years with with W.I.C. She is very proud to have worked in what she calls one of the country's top lead poisoning prevention programs. She has a brother and a sister who also work for the City. One is a detective and the other a postal worker. Her free time is spent with her children who attend Milwaukee Lutheran and she is a member of Mount Olive church.

Anthony Goodman was hired as a full-time Nuisance Control Officer October 20th. Previously he worked at a ground water treatment plant in Ashippun, Wisconsin and as a waste water operator doing lab analysis in Milwaukee. He is studying to complete a degree in biological science at UW-Milwaukee. He received an award as Project manager for his work in upgrading the system at a waste water plant in Milwaukee. He is married with 4 children. In his free time he plays soccer and dominos.

Stacey Tyler joined us as a Code Enforcement Intern on August 21, 2000. She has years in at UW-Milwaukee studying pre-med as a major and a minor in business. She worked at Walgreens Health Initiatives as a patient care consultant in nutritionals. She has many hobbies which she enjoys in addition to her two children.

Steven Chalstrom started in August as a Code Enforcement Intern. He attended Pulaski High School and is completing his general education degree at MATC. He spends his free time with his 3 year old son Billy.

Yolanda J. Mack is the new President of the Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation. She will be starting on January 3, 2000. She comes to us from Kenosha where she has had significant experience in administrative, fiscal, and public contact.

Brian Kaufman is a new building inspector in the construction division. Brian is no stranger to the city with 13 years of service in both water and sewer engineering. Brian is married with three children, enjoys camping and fishing and was told by his spouse that he is taking up golf.

Michael Hammerman has also joined the DNS Construction inspection team on the 10th floor. His work background includes 16 years in contract engineering and construction, plus 6 years in design and architecture. For fun and as an exported F.I.B. (Friendly Illinois Bachelor), Michael likes to spend plenty of time working on his golf game.



(L-R) Brian Kaufman and Michael Hammerman are construction inspectors and Lori Hoffman works in NIDC.

Lori Hoffman started with the City in March of 1996 in what was called ISD. She was a key punch operator on a part-time basis at night. She worked with that department for about four months and was promoted to a full-time Customer Service Rep. I with the City Treasurer's office. She remained with the treasurer's office for about four years. After her maternity leave she accepted the job as an Office Assistant III with NIDC. Her two daughters, Carinn, age 6 and Carli, 5 months make her world go round. ☺

Plumbing Section Update

by the Plumbing Office Staff

Our office staff received updated computers. The inspectors who had the oldest computers received an upgrade. The staff members have been giving individual training to the inspectors to help keep their computer skills sharp.

The billing system is changing. Richard Paur, Mark Krowski and Mary Kaiser have been working with the Development Center trying to streamline the total operation into a workable solution.

This also means added work for our yearly mailing. We mail the contractors their bonds, insurance, telephone lists, fee information, maps and holiday listings. This year we will include the new fee system letter. We have approximately 400 contractors who receive this information.

In order to keep up with new and ever changing technology in the plumbing trades, we are resuming our monthly training sessions. In addition, the staff is attending a new product seminar for the recently approved studor vent – a mechanical air admittance device designed to eliminate individual vents for plumbing fixtures. This new product requires different engineering and sizing specifications, necessitating this state approved training program.

The Halloween decorations were a big hit again this year. Frankenstein greeting you at the door, the talking grim reaper and our ceiling man seemed to be the favorites. However, the witch was our favorite and she required the most work. We had more walk-throughs this year than last year and they were delighted to see the creativity of our decorated office. We did give out a few treats to those who came in to "trick or treat".

We hope that you will come and see our Christmas decorations. We will be starting after the Thanksgiving Holiday. Please give us a few weeks to finish as this does take a lot of "lunch hour" time. ☺

DNS United Way Campaign Update

by Carolyn Wood

DNS' Combined Giving Campaign was a success this year, thanks to the involvement of many of our people. Carolyn Wood and Al Garcia were this year's coordinators for the campaign. Jeff Crouse, Jim Igowsky, Diane Koester, Barry Kusik, Carey Meier, and Karen Reasby were solicitors, responsible for distributing and retrieving enrollment forms for their sections.

Each person's gift will provide important support to the agencies they designated. Among the many DNS givers, this year we have 4 "super share" givers, people who donate at least an hour's earnings per pay period to Combined Giving, and 33 "fair share" givers who give a half hour earnings per pay period. We even had one super, super, super share giver who will donate over 3 hours of earnings every pay period to support people in need!

During the campaign, we sold 439 raffle tickets, thanks to the assertive salesmanship of Diane Koester, Judy Lathon-Carson, and others. Marty Collins won the "Day With the Chief of Police"--a day to spend with Police Chief Arthur Jones. Marty said he hopes to use the time to build collaborations between our two departments. Jon Lang won the "Seagull's View"--a tour of the Milwaukee Harbor for two on the Harbor Seagull.

Our third annual bake sale was fun and rewarding, bringing in an additional \$397 for the campaign. Pandora Bender set up a very decorative display of Halloween and Christmas ornamentation. Assistant City Attorney Bruce Schrimpf's electric train added to the Christmas ambiance. Many, many people donated their time in baking the goodies and Richard Alaniz, Pandora Bender, Diane Koester, Sue Pucek, Katina Roberson, Michael Veith, and Carolyn Wood manned the sales tables that drew employees from throughout the City Hall complex. Thanks to all the bakers, sellers and eaters who participated!

Another aspect of the campaign was a supply drive for the Hope House Shelter. DNS employees donated over 12 containers of canned foods, paper products, and personal supplies such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, etc. The Hope House was amazed and very grateful for the quantity of donations we dropped off.

With all of these people's help, DNS reached its departmental goal. We're proud that so many DNS employees have continued our tradition of giving back to our communities. Thanks to everyone who participated! ☺



DNS employees generously donated food and health items for the Hope House Shelter thanks to Carolyn's team effort to get a variety of donations.

RECORD DECEMBER SNOWS CALL FOR EXTRA SAFETY MEASURES

Milwaukee now has a new snowfall record for December! The Department of Neighborhood Services (DNS) and the Milwaukee Fire Department are alerting all building owners to some potentially dangerous situations due to snow, cold and high winds.

All owners of buildings with emergency exits are urged to check all exits and shovel out snow blocked in doors. Shifting winds can block exits without warning! This is a life-threatening condition in the event of fire. At relatively low temperatures, the freezing and thawing slush can freeze shut an exit. Fire Fighting personnel are delayed entry to fight the fire in this case.

Exits to alleys and back entrances are the most likely to be blocked. If a building has an "EXIT" sign over the door, it is a required exit and must remain clear at all times! To report a blocked exit, alert the owner or call the Department of Neighborhood Services at 286-2268.

Here are some other winter weather related life safety issues for building owners.

1. Time to dig out buried fire hydrants. During a house fire, a burning waste basket can turn an entire living room into a flame filled inferno in as little as 8 minutes. Every minute wasted by fire crews digging out fire hydrants wastes precious time that could be spent fighting fire. Look on your block to see that fire hydrants are visible and accessible.

2. Do not store or thaw out snow blowers indoors near furnaces. Most snow blowers are gas powered and the gasoline they contain is flammable. Pilot lights in furnaces and water heaters provide a source for ignition. Melting snow mixed with gasoline from refueling could pool on the basement floor creating a hazardous situation.

(Gasoline trivia- One gallon of gasoline, if properly vaporized, is equal to 50 lbs. of dynamite. Modern demolition technicians can bring down an entire high-rise building with as little as 15 lbs. of dynamite.)

3. Space heaters need space- A leading cause of home fires in winter is space heaters. Space heaters need a minimum of three feet of space to be safe. Never use a space heater near a flammable source such as curtains, blankets, or gasoline. Never use an extension cord with a space heater. Never leave a space heater on without adult supervision.

4. High efficiency furnace vent pipes must remain clear. New high energy furnaces operate so well that very little heat is unused. As such the vent pipe can be of plastic to tolerate the lower temperature and can be vented out the side of a house like a clothes dryer vent. These small (typically white plastic) pipes can be buried by a snowblower or plow. If blocked, the carbon monoxide can back up into the home or the furnace may not operate. The same applies to high energy water heaters, but they generally are always hot from running continuously. Check all outside exhaust vents around the low side of the home to be sure they are clear of snow and ice.

5. Canopy and sloping overhangs present falling ice hazard. Most modern buildings in Wisconsin are designed to take into account snow loads and ice build up. However variances are granted in some cases, like historic buildings, that may allow for hazardous conditions. Snow build up should be monitored and possibly removed if there is a danger from falling ice. Pedestrian walkways may contain warnings and should be monitor for sudden deluges of

snow and ice as temperatures warm up. High winds can "plaster" entire sides of buildings. Those same winds can peel off snow and ice creating hazards as they fall.

6. (Extreme COLD) Open doors on kitchen sinks cabinet mounted on exterior walls. Some older, less insulated homes, may have a kitchen sink built on an exterior wall. In colder temperatures the pipes may freeze. To avoid that, open the kitchen cabinet doors to allow warm room air to circulate and keep the pipes warm.

Winter Holiday Safety Tips and a children's Fire Safety Coloring Book can be downloaded from the DNS web site at <http://www.ci.mil.wi.us/citygov/dns/main/sections/publicinfo/documents.html> ☺

Milwaukee's Noise Ordinance: What are the results to date?

by Martin G. Collins, Commissioner

In May of 2000 the Common Council adopted, on the recommendation of DNS and MPD, an ordinance to help control the noise nuisances coming from buildings. Chapter 80 had long regulated the noise problem but was not constructed in a way that allowed the MPD to effectively issue citations for violations. The revised code works like this: If the police issue a noise citation, (\$221) they fax a copy to DNS (Dave Krey). DNS issues a notice of violation to the property owner stating that they have a noise nuisance on their property. The text also explains the reasons why it's good business and good policy to prevent recurrences. In addition, it indicates that if a subsequent violation occurs in the same tenancy the Department may charge for the cost of the police services and the DNS notice charges and place those charges on the property's tax roll as a special assessment. The Department's policy is to not do so where the owner can provide the Department proof that the owner is proceeding with eviction within seven days of the second notice.

Over eight months have passed and the data has started to show a distinct pattern. The MPD has faxed DNS ninety citations. These are primarily, but not exclusively, on rental property in the UWM area. DNS has sent notices to the owners of those ninety buildings. To date, we have only had to assess police and DNS charges on two properties. DNS has received dozens of copies of notices given by landlords to their tenants warning them that they will be evicted if a subsequent violation of the lease occurs. This data is clear proof that this approach is effective in reducing recurrences of noise violations.

Data does not always show the whole picture. To add a reality check to the numbers, I have checked with Alderman D'Amato in the Fifth District where UWM is located. He confirms that the ordinance has been effective in reducing noise emanating from property. Calls for such types of nuisances have decreased noticeably since the passage and enforcement of the ordinance. By providing rental property owners with data that they need to enforce their lease rights, DNS has helped reduce a problem of long standing in the UWM neighborhood. MPD plans to use the tool elsewhere in the City. My thanks go out to Dave Krey and Judy Hartung for making our part work well. ☺